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The Honorable Breene Harimoto, and Members of the City Council

Re: Testimony in support of Resolution 13-1, Requesting City Administration to Provide Electronic Benefit Transfer Point-of-Sale Terminals at the City's People's Open Market Program Venues to Assist Low-Income Families in Purchasing Fresh and Healthy Foods

This letter is being submitted in support of Resolution 13-1. I work in Kalihi Valley, an area with two of the largest public housing complexes and a basically lower social economic community. We see daily many individuals and families whose food habits are reflective in their poor health. Upon closer examination, we find that their diet is deficient in fruits, vegetables and whole, minimally processed foods. It is high in canned, processed, convenience foods...which contribute too much salt, fat, and chemicals on a regular basis. We offer programs that are designed to bring them to the back of the valley where we have an acre and a half organic garden, where they love to learn about the produce...how to plant it, grow it and prepare it. They tell us they want to have these foods available to them on a regular basis. It would be beneficial to all if we were able to find ways that allowed for easier access to these fruits and vegetables.

One area where this would be possible is our local Farmers' Market. For the past year Kokua Kalihi Valley (KKV) has partnered with Wholesome Wave to offer an incentive program entitled "Double Your Bucks". We offer tokens to increase the purchasing power of their EBT dollars for local produce. Many customers are surprised at first to know that their EBT cards can be used at the Farmers' Market. Once they find out they often return the next week. We have a chance to chat with them on a regular basis and they tell us that having the EBT card at the market has definitely increased their intake of fruits and vegetables. This is a definite success factor and it's implications should be taken seriously. SNAP participant spending at Farmers Markets has declined 3-fold in the decade since EBT was introduced. Making our local produce affordable with relatively easy access could go a long way to improving the eating habits of our struggling populations. Through my work I have met with students and colleagues who believe very strongly in this and are willing to support these efforts.

I strongly urge you to pass this resolution and give us the opportunity to work together to improve the health of our communities.

Mahalo , Sharon Kaiulani Odom, kodom@kkv.net, 808-352-2746d